

Our Brothers' Keepers: Secure Routing with High Performance *

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Abstract

The Trinity [BB07] spam classification system is based on a distributed hash table that is implemented using a structured peer-to-peer overlay. Such an overlay must be capable of processing hundreds of messages per second, and must be able to route messages to their destination even in the presence of failures and malicious peers that misroute packets or inject fraudulent routing information into the system. Typically there is tension between the requirements to route messages securely and efficiently in the overlay.

We describe a secure and efficient routing extension that we developed within the I3 [SAZ⁺04] implementation of the Chord [SMK⁺01] overlay. Secure routing is accomplished through several complementary approaches: First, peers in close proximity form overlapping groups that police themselves to identify and mitigate fraudulent routing information. Second, a form of random routing solves the problem of entire packet flows passing through a malicious peer. Third, a message authentication mechanism links each message to its sender, preventing spoofing. Fourth, each peer's identifier links the peer to its network address, and at the same time uniformly distributes the peers in the key-space.

Lastly, we present our initial evaluation of the system, comprising a 255 peer overlay running on a local cluster. We describe our methodology and show that the overhead of our secure implementation is quite reasonable.

keywords: secure routing, peer authentication, distributed hash tables

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1 Introduction

Systems such as Trinity [BB07], LOCKSS [MRR⁺03], and others are based on distributed hash tables that are implemented on top of peer-to-peer structured overlays. These overlays differ from better known peer-to-peer systems such as BitTorrent in three fundamental ways. First, these overlays are closed, meaning that only authorized hosts may join the overlay. Second, these overlays must be secure and function even in the presence of failures, denial of service attacks, and malicious peers. Third, performance is paramount, meaning that each peer in the these overlays must be able to forward hundreds of messages per second.

Although securing closed overlays seems more manageable than the task of securing open overlays, the task presents several challenges. First, identifying, authenticating and authorizing peers and authenticating the messages that they send is not easy because the mechanisms must be fault tolerant, allow revocation, and must not significantly impact performance. Second, securely routing messages, dealing with host and network failures, and most importantly, dealing with malicious peers and the fraudulent routing information that they inject into the overlay is challenging in itself, let alone without significantly impacting performance.

As part of the Trinity project [BB07], we have designed, implemented, and tested a secure closed overlay based on the I3 [SAZ⁺04] Chord [SMK⁺01] implementation. Our design comprises a distributed and fault tolerant identification, authentication, and authorization mechanism; a key assignment scheme that encodes a peer’s network location yet ensures that the keys are uniformly distributed in the key space; a self-policing scheme based on groups of local peers; and a form of random routing that ensures that no (malicious) peer is a choke-point between any two other peers.

In addition to describing our approaches, we present a performance evaluation, which was performed on a local cluster that hosted overlays consisting of 255 peers. We compare the performance of our system in “secure” and “insecure” modes, and show that the performance penalty for secure operation is acceptable.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 describes our assumptions and the Chord protocol. Section 3 describes the three parts of our approach and Section 4 describes our evaluation of the system. Lastly, Section 5 and 6 describe related work, and discuss future work.

2 Preliminaries

We selected the Chord [SMK⁺01] structured overlay to provide lookup services for the Trinity [BB07] system because Chord has good performance characteristics and provides control over the location of peers within the overlay, which makes securing the overlay easier [SM02, CDG⁺02].

The Chord [SMK⁺01] overlay structure assigns each peer a unique key, k , from a 160-bit key-space and organizes the peers into a single ring in order of their keys. The predecessor and successor of key k are the keys k_p and k_s , respectively, belonging to peers in the ring, such that $k - k_p \bmod 2^{160}$ and $k_s - k \bmod 2^{160}$, respectively, are minimal. Intuitively, the peer to whom key k is assigned is located between its predecessor and successor, the peers to whom the keys k_p and k_s are assigned. If a key k is not assigned to a peer in the ring, then the peer whose key is the successor to k is responsible for the key. Consequently, each peer is responsible for all the possible key values between it and its predecessor.

When a peer joins the ring, it locates its position within the ring by sending a “find successor” request with its own key, k , to a “well known” peer that is already in the ring. The request is routed to the current predecessor of k , whose successor is therefore also the successor of k . The predecessor replies to the new peer, informing it of both the successor and itself. The new peer then informs the successor and predecessor of its existence and assumes its location in ring. Lastly, the peer builds its routing table, called a finger table.

The finger table is used by the peer to forward a message toward its eventual destination. The finger

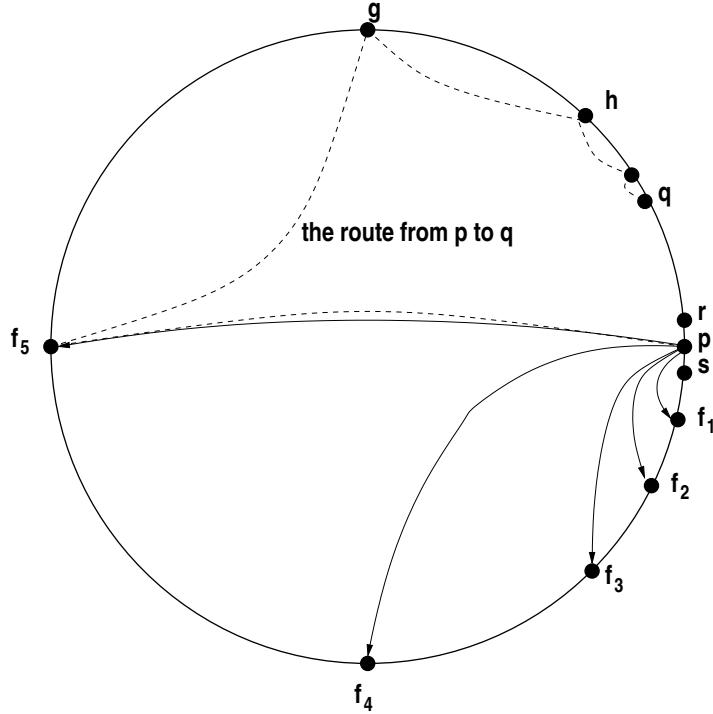


Figure 1: The peers labeled f_i are in p 's finger table, peer g is in peer f_5 's finger table, and peer h is in peer g 's finger table. Peers r and s are the predecessor and successor of peer p .

table comprises keys of select peers in the ring. Typically, the table contains $O(\log N)$ keys of peers that are $\frac{1}{2^i}$ of a ring away, $i = 1 \dots \log(N)$, where N is the number of peers in the ring (see Figure 1). To forward a message to the peer responsible for key k , the peer with the closest preceding key to k is selected from the finger table, and the message is forwarded directly to that peer. Thus, the distance to the destination peer is decreased by at least half, and after at most $O(\log N)$ such hops, the message arrives at the destination. If the closest preceding peer is the current peer, then the message is forwarded directly to the peer's successor, its destination.

The finger table is populated by performing additional “find successor” queries with key values of the form $k + 2^i \bmod 2^{160}$, $0 < i < 160$. Additional ongoing “find successor” queries, at regular intervals, are used to update the finger table as well as the peer's successor and predecessor. Also, a simple heart-beat mechanism tracks when peers leave the ring.

Unfortunately, the system as described, is susceptible to many attacks. First, the overlay uses an unreliable message-based transport protocol, User Datagram Protocol (UDP), that is susceptible to spoofing because the source address of a message can easily be forged. Thus, the source of the message can not be (reliably) determined. Second, the system, as described, allows any host to become a peer, which is problematic for a closed overlay and can lead to the admittance of malicious peers. Third, as a result of the first two weaknesses, the overlay is susceptible to denial of service attacks because large numbers of messages and requests can be injected into the overlay by external hosts.

Fourth, the overlay relies on the correct behaviour of all of its constituents. For example, all peers must correctly forward and reply to “find successor” requests. Malicious peers can inject fraudulent rout-

ing information into the overlay by replying with incorrect “find successor” replies, dropping requests, or misdirecting the requests. Consequently, a few collaborating malicious peers could cause segments of the ring to “drop out”. This is a problem even if peers are initially identified and authenticated prior to joining because peers may be compromised and an initially nonmalicious peer may become malicious.

In fact, the only assumption that we can reasonably make, assuming that all peers are identified and authenticated before joining, is that only a small fraction of peers are malicious. The challenge then, is to limit the ability of the malicious peers to collaborate and disrupt the overlay, to detect malicious peers, and evict them from the overlay.

3 Design and Implementation

Our implementation is an extension of the I3 [SAZ⁺04] code-base. Our implementation comprises five parts: (i) a key assignment scheme that links each peer’s key with its network address¹ while at the same time uniformly distributing the peers’ keys in the ring; (ii) a distributed identification, authentication, and (revocable) authorization mechanism that allows the overlay to control what peers are admitted into the ring; (iii) a message authentication mechanism that links each message to its sender; (iv) a self-policing mechanism based on overlapping groups composed of proximate peers; and (v) a simple form of random routing that avoids the possibility of any peer becoming a choke point between two other peers.

3.1 Key Assignment

As was observed in [SM02] and [CDG⁺02], it is harder for malicious peers to collaborate when they are uniformly distributed in the ring than when they are clustered. Consequently, peers should be assigned keys from a uniform distribution. Thus, prior to joining, each peer is expected to choose a key from the uniform distribution on the key space. However, there is nothing that prevents malicious peers from choosing keys that facilitate collaboration. Furthermore, a randomly selected key, only encodes the peers position within the ring, not the network, which another peer would need to contact it directly. Lastly, the choice of the peer’s network address is typically limited and in most cases beyond the control of the peer, malicious or otherwise.

We leverage this restriction to assign keys to peers so that the peers have no choice in their key, the key is unique, the key encodes a peer’s network address, and the key appears to be chosen from the uniform distribution on the key space. To determine its key a peer concatenates its IP address and port number, both in network byte order, to create a 6 byte string. This string is passed through the SHA-1 function, generating a 20 byte hash. The hash is the same length as a key, 20 bytes, and appears as if it was chosen from the uniform distribution on the key space.² Lastly, the IP address and the port number replace the 6 least significant bytes of the hash, as suggested in [CDG⁺02].

The resulting 20 byte key, can easily be validated by extracting the 6 least significant bytes, passing them from the SHA-1 function, and comparing the 14 most significant bytes of the resulting hash and the key—they should match. The 14 most significant bytes of the key look as if they were drawn from a uniform distribution, ensuring that the peers are uniformly distributed throughout the ring. Lastly, the key uniquely identifies each peer because the IP address of each peer is necessarily unique. Thus, each peer can be uniquely identified.

¹Both IP address and port number.

²In reality the hash is uniformly chosen from key subspace of cardinality 2^{48} , the size of the input string.

3.2 Distributed Identification, Authentication and Authorization

A peer must be identified, authenticated, and authorized before it can join the overlay. The peer's key uniquely identifies the peer, but it does not authenticate the peer, which is a prerequisite for authorization. Since the maliciousness of a peer may be discovered only after it joins the ring, authorization must be revocable, in order to facilitate the excommunication of such peers.

Authentication is accomplished by using a public key signature system—each new peer generates a public-private key-pair. A peer authenticates a message by first embedding its 20-byte key into the message and then signing it. However, two problems remain: distribution of the public key, and the authorization of the peer. Both of these problems are solved simultaneously by leveraging the Domain Name System (DNS) [Moc87a, Moc87b].

Each ring is identified by a domain name in the DNS database and each authorized peer in the ring has corresponding a TXT entry within the domain, identified by the peer's key and storing a certificate that contains the peer's public key. The authority responsible for authorizing peers is also responsible for signing the certificates and for adding or removing the TXT entries.

When a peer receives a message from another peer, it checks its cache for the sender's public key, if present then the sender is authorized to participate in the ring. Otherwise, the receiver performs a DNS lookup for the sender's key in the ring's domain. If found, the sender's public key is added to the cache and the sender is deemed to be authorized. If not, a negative entry is added to the cache, causing the peer to ignore all future messages from the sender until the negative entry expires. Authorizations are revoked by removing the corresponding TXT entry from the DNS database and informing all peers via a broadcast.

We leverage the DNS system because it has proven to be relatively robust and fault tolerant. In fact, robustness can be increased by simply adding more name servers. Furthermore, a DNS query is only needed when a new peer joins. In theory, peers could broadcast the certificates they receive from their DNS queries, informing the ring of the joining peer. Thus, an attack on the DNS system would only prevent new peers from joining the ring. One problem with our approach is that authenticating each message using a public key signature is prohibitively expensive.

3.3 Message Authentication

A message is linked to its sender because it contains the sender's key and then signed by the sender. Since the keys are unique and contain the sender's network address, each message can be traced to its origin. Thus, if fraudulent messages are detected, the sender can be identified with certainty and excommunicated.

Unfortunately, signing and verifying all messages using a public key signature system is expensive. For example, to determine the overhead of using a public key signature system, we ran a two peer ring on a single 1.60GHz Intel Xeon E5310 (4-core) server with 2 gigabytes of RAM, and had one peer ping the other. This nullified the any potential network related slowdown, and allocated one CPU to each peer, thus avoiding any issues associated with sharing a CPU. Without message authentication, the system performed about 4000 pings per second—approximately 8000 messages per second. With message authentication, using public key signatures, the number of pings per second dropped to 15—a slowdown by a factor of 300!

We solve this problem by using message authentication codes (MAC) as the default authentication mechanism. The Chord overlay structure exhibits good temporal locality with respect to communication, meaning that if a peer communicates directly with another peer, it will do so repeatedly in the future. The first time two peers communicate directly, they exchange shared secret keys (using public key encryption), and use shared keys to authenticate all messages to each other. Using HMAC based authentication, the performance of our system went back up to about 3500 pings per second.

3.4 Our Brothers' Keepers

Chord overlay structure relies on peers behaving properly: forwarding requests that they cannot satisfy and replying truthfully to requests that they can satisfy. However, if a malicious peer does not forward requests, or even worse, misdirects the requests or sends fraudulent replies, the overlay structure can be subverted. In particular, maligning the “find successor” requests, which are used by peers to find their position within the ring and construct finger tables, can create loops and partitions within the ring, rendering the overlay dysfunctional. That is, a few collaborating malicious peers could cause segments of the ring to “drop out”.

Realistically, we can neither ensure that no malicious peer will ever join, nor can we ensure that no peer will ever be compromised. Malicious peers are distinguished by their behaviour that, when detected, can be quashed by excommunicating the peer. Thus, by increasing the system’s ability to detect malicious behaviour, the amount of damage caused by a malicious peer can be limited. Since our key assignment scheme ensures that with high probability two malicious peers will not be near each other in the ring, we use a peer group approach to improve detection of malicious behaviour, i.e., the peer’s proximate peers keep it honest.

Each peer in the ring, is associated with a peer group of size g , where g is a small odd number, such as 5, 7, 9, 11, etc. The group comprises the peer itself—the group leader—and $g - 1$ of its closest peers: $\frac{g-1}{2}$ closest preceding peers and $\frac{g-1}{2}$ closest succeeding peers. Thus, each peer belongs to g overlapping groups of size g . Furthermore, given our assumption about the uniform distribution of malicious peers, the chance of a group having multiple malicious peers is small.

When a new peer joins the ring, it queries its predecessor and successor for their group memberships, constructs its own group membership list from the responses, and then queries the other peers in its group to confirm their membership. On an ongoing basis, the peers in a group query each other’s membership lists, updating them as peers join or leave. In closed overlays, particularly in the case of Trinity, we assume that the rate at which peers join and leave the ring is relatively low. Hence, a peer’s group membership list will not change often.

In fact, a peer is only added to a group only after it has been verified by the group’s leader, ensuring that group lists only contain valid peers. These group lists also provide a fast mechanism for finding a new successor or predecessors if the current one leaves (or fails) the ring.

A peer’s group membership list, should be consistent with those of the group’s members, e.g., if the group of peer p is (n, o, p, q, r) , then peer q ’s group should be (o, p, q, r, s) . Thus, if a peer sends a group list that is inconsistent with the lists of other group members, it is considered malicious, or at least untrustworthy. Consequently, malicious peers cannot easily send fraudulent “find successor” responses about their group members, because similar queries to their neighbours would unmask them. The result is that peers cannot send out false “find successor” replies to any of its neighbouring peers without being excommunicated.

However, it is also necessary to ensure that remote peers are also honest, i.e., those peers that are not within a peer’s group. This is accomplished by leveraging the group structure. Specifically, a peer’s “find successor” response is be verified by querying a member of its peer group, and is based on the fact that peers in the same group will have similar finger tables.

Recall, that a peer’s i th finger table entry contains the successor to key $k + 2^i \bmod 2^{160}$, where k is the peer’s key. Assuming that peers are uniformly distributed in the ring, if peers with keys k and k' are adjacent, then the successors to $k + 2^i \bmod 2^{160}$ and $k' + 2^i \bmod 2^{160}$ will likely be close to each other in the ring, if not the same peer. Thus, there will be considerable overlap between the groups associated with the i th finger table entries of the two peers. Consequently, a “find successor” response can be verified by resending the query to a member of the responder’s group.

To facilitate this approach, and to verify the consistency of the groups associated with the finger table

entries, our implementation uses an expanded finger table that stores the keys of the peer’s entire group rather than just the peer’s key—the finger table stores g keys per entry. Furthermore, a peer’s “find successor” response includes the keys of the peer’s entire group. Since “find successor” queries are sent on an ongoing basis, the finger table entries are updated and checked on a regular basis. Lastly, storing entire groups in the finger table, instead of single peers, facilitates the implementation of a simple randomized routing scheme, mitigating the problem of packet dropping by malicious peers.

3.5 Randomized Routing

Even if a malicious peer does not send fraudulent routing responses, it can still cause problem by simply dropping all messages. If a malicious peer is a choke-point between two other peers—all messages from one peer to the other are routed through it—then none of the messages may get through. Detecting this behaviour is problematic because the I3 Chord implementation and many other overlay systems use lightweight connectionless unreliable transport protocols, such as UDP. Consequently, it is impossible to distinguish between poor network connectivity and a misbehaving peer. Fortunately, our scheme can mitigate both problems. We note that we cannot ensure that no messages will be lost; only that with high probability, not all the messages will pass through the same peer, while in transit.

We use a variant of randomized routing [LMRR94]. Traditional randomized routing forwards the message to a randomly chosen peer in the system, and then from that peer to the destination. This can dramatically increase the latency, particularly if the destination peer is close to the sender but the randomly chosen peer is far away. Instead, in our scheme, multiple messages between two peers take different but comparable length paths, ensuring that a choke-point can not form.

When a message arrives at a peer, the peer classifies the message’s destination as either local, near, or far. If the destination is local, then the message has arrived at its destination. If the destination is near, then the message is destined to a neighbour of the peer and is forwarded directly to its destination. Otherwise, a peer is selected and the message is forwarded to it.

According to the traditional deterministic forwarding protocol, the peer whose key most closely precedes the message destination is chosen from the finger table, and the message is forwarded to this peer. In our implementation, a group is chosen from the finger table such that the group leader’s most closely precedes the message destination. Then, a peer is randomly chosen from this group and the message is forwarded to it. Since the finger tables of the peers in a group are similar, the route taken between two peers will differ in the peers that the messages transit. However, as discussed in the preceding section, these peers are near each other within the ring, implying that the total number of hops will not vary greatly.

The correctness of the protocol does not change as long as the key of the peer selected from the finger table precedes the message destination, and since all peers in a group are, by definition, near each other, the size of each hop is will differ by an additive constant, resulting in a small variance in the number of hops that a message takes.

4 Evaluation

To evaluate the performance of our implementation we used a 255 peer ring running on a 26 machine cluster running OpenBSD 4.3 and 4.2. One of these machines was an Intel Xeon X3210 2.13GHz Quad-core based server with 4GB of RAM, which ran 5 peers on it and served as the name server for the cluster. Each of the remaining 25 machines was an Intel Pentium 4 2.80 GHz based desktop with 1 GB of RAM. Each of these desktops ran 10 peers each and all the machines were interconnected via a Cisco WS-C2924-XL-EN and

a Cisco WS-C3548-XL-EN managed switches that were locked at 10 Mb/s half-duplex—the mean latency between any two machines in the cluster was 0.5 milliseconds, with a negligible variance. We performed several different tests to measure the latency, throughput, and capacity of our implementation in both secure and insecure modes, in order to compare the overhead associated with secure mode.

4.1 Latency and Throughput

We first compared the latency and throughput overhead of secure versus insecure operation. Since peers regenerate and exchange their shared keys at regular intervals, different parts of ring had different loads at different times. To compensate for this, a series of test runs were performed, spanning a sufficiently large time interval, and the minimums over these test runs were used.

Each test comprises two communicating peers: the initiator, which conducts and times the test, and the responder, which serves as the other end-point of the communication. The latency test measures the round trip time of a ping and its echo. The initiator pings the responder, which echos the ping—both the ping and the echo are routed through the overlay. The test is repeated sequentially a set number of times and the count is divided by the total time, yielding the round trip time per ping. The throughput test measures how fast packets (or messages) can be sent through the overlay. The initiator sends a throughput request to the responder, indicating the number of packets the responder should send back. The responder sends the requested number of packets (through the overlay) as quickly as possible, and the initiator measures the time difference between the arrival of the first and last packets—the number of packets divided by the difference is the throughput.

Our evaluation fixed one of the five peers on the 4-core server to be the initiator, and used the 250 peers running on the 25 desktops as responders. For both latency and throughput measurements, the initiator performed 12 test series consisting of 10 test runs that consisted of 250 tests, once for each peer. Each latency test performed 10 pings at a time and each throughput test had the responder send back 1000 packets. Each series takes the minimum measurement for each peer over the 10 runs. The minimums for each peer from the 12 series are averaged to yield the latency or throughput measurement.

Table 1 displays the mean, median, maximum, minimum, and standard deviation round trip times and throughput measured for all 250 peers. The table shows the measurements for both insecure mode operation and secure mode operation, and the overhead of the secure mode.

	Latency			Throughput		
	Insecure Op. RTT (sec)	Secure Op. RTT (sec)	Relative Difference	Insecure Op. Pkts / sec	Secure Op. Pkts / sec	Relative Difference
Mean	0.002874	0.003457	20.2%	6148	4946	19.4%
Median	0.002897	0.003483	20.2%	6389	5087	20.4%
Maximum	0.003542	0.004282	20.9%	7794	6566	15.8%
Minimum	0.000759	0.000880	15.9%	3107	2643	14.9%
Std. Dev.	0.000335	0.000411	N/A	1164	930	N/A

Table 1: Summary statistics of round trip times to peers and packets per second from peers.

The measured latency in secure mode is 20% greater than the latency in insecure mode. Although, this seems high, it is important to remember that there were 10 peers running on each host, making the system CPU bound and that the time difference, 0.6 milliseconds, is negligible compared to the typical latency between two hosts in the Internet.

The throughput in secure mode is also on average 20% lower. This is due to the cost of authenticating messages: the sender has to sign each message and the receiver has to verify the message. Since message authentication is a CPU bounded task, its effect will be less when only one peer is running on each server.

It is more instructive to view the round trip times for each peer and throughput from each peer in a sorted order. The first graph in Figure 2 shows the round trip times to all the peers for both insecure and secure operation modes, in ascending order of times measured in insecure mode. The second graph in Figure 2 shows the throughput from all the peers for both insecure and secure operation modes, in descending order of times measured in insecure mode.

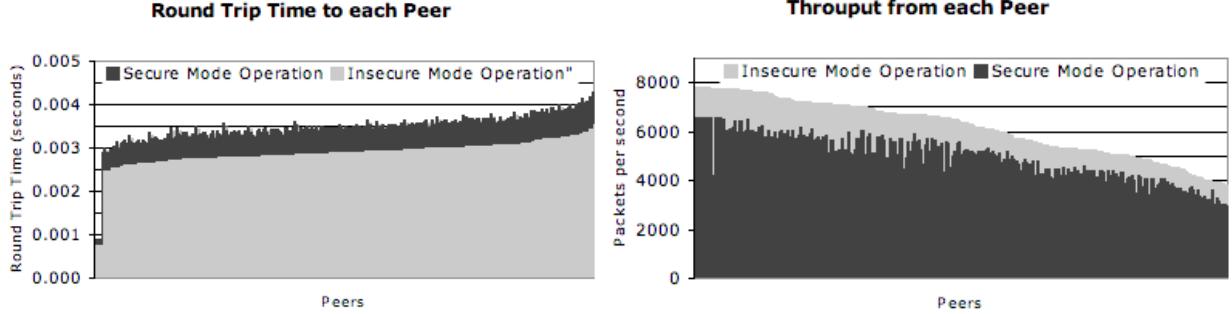


Figure 2: Round trip times to peers.

Several artifacts are immediately visible in the first graph: First, four peers have much lower round trip times. These peers are the successors and predecessors of the peer performing the ping, and hence both the ping and the response only take one hop. Second, there is large jump in round trip times for both insecure and secure modes; approximately, 0.0025 and 0.003 seconds respectively. Since the minimum latency between two peers in the cluster is 0.0005 seconds, this means that pings to and from all the other peers take between 6 and 9 hops, which makes sense for a ring of 255 peers. Lastly, and most importantly, the relative difference in latency between insecure and secure operation remains fixed, at 0.06 milliseconds per hop.

The second graph also exhibits a couple important features. First, the graph has a step feature, corresponding to the distances between the initiator and the responders. The closer a responder is to the initiator, the higher the measured throughput. Second, the relative decrease in throughput between insecure and secure operation remains relatively constant. As before the primary reason for the reduction is the cost of message authentication and is noticeable because 10 peers were running on each single-core machine.

4.2 Capacity

The capacity of an overlay is the measure of the number of messages that the system can deliver per unit time. To measure the system's capacity we implemented a game of hot-potato over the overlay: A set number of messages (potatoes) are injected into the system. The potatoes are randomly passed from peer to peer, and counter in each potato tracks the number of times the potato is passed. By varying the number of concurrent potatoes in the system, we control the system's load.

When a peer receives a potato, it increments the potato's counter, generates a random key, and sends the potato to the peer responsible for the random key. To ensure that no potato is dropped, the receiving peer acknowledges the potato, and the sender acknowledges the acknowledgment. Only after receiving the second acknowledgment does the receiver commence the next potato pass. If potato's originator receives it,

and the potato has been in the system for a minimum amount of time, e.g., 60 seconds, the number of passes per second for the potato is computed, by dividing the value of the potato's pass counter by the number of seconds that the potato was in the system. The potato's time to live counter is then decremented, and if nonzero, the potato's pass counter is reset and the potato is injected into the system again. This ensures a period of consistent load.

In each of the runs, the first measurement from the first 75 ejected potatoes was used. Table 2 exhibits the mean, median, standard deviation, maximum, and minimum number of passes per second that a potato achieved under different system loads: 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, and 160 potatoes in the system. Note: a pass consists of a 3-message exchange between two peers in the system and message delivery may take multiple hops within the overlay.

# of msgs	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	160
Insecure Mode Operation									
Mean	163	134	107	86	72	60	51	45	23
Median	163	134	106	86	72	60	51	45	22
Std. Dev.	3.3	2.8	2.1	2.3	2.0	1.6	1.4	1.8	2.4
Maximum	172	141	113	92	77	65	54	50	33
Minimum	156	127	103	81	67	56	48	42	19
Secure Mode Operation									
Mean	138	115	93	76	62	53	45	40	20
Median	137	115	94	76	62	53	45	39	19
Std. Dev.	3.4	2.0	2.1	1.6	1.4	1.3	1.6	1.8	2.6
Maximum	147	120	98	79	68	55	49	46	29
Minimum	131	109	89	71	58	47	42	36	15

Table 2: Number of passes per second that a message takes.

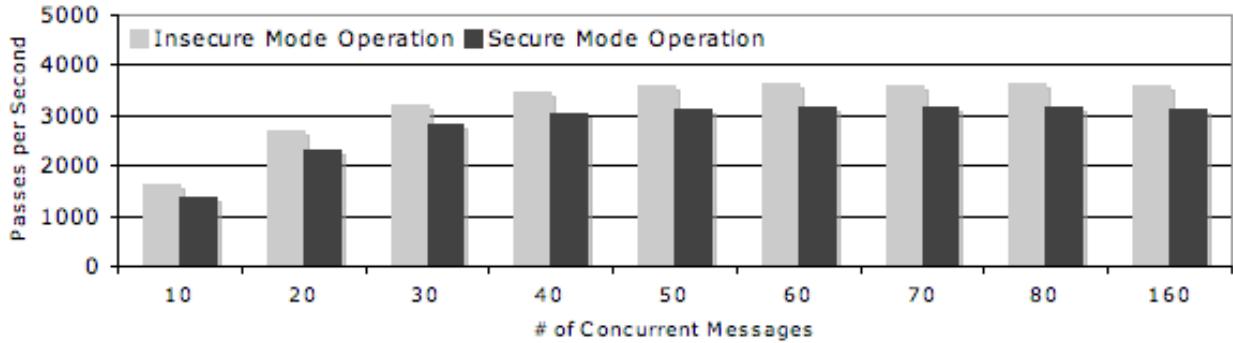


Figure 3: Capacity of overlay.

As the load increases, the number of passes per second of a potato decreases because the likelihood that a peer may need to process multiple potatoes at once increases. However, passes per second of a potato does not yield a measure of the capacity of the system as a whole. The capacity of the system is the number of passes per second that the system performs over all. This is equal to the average number of passes per

second multiplied by the number potatoes in the system.

Figure 3 exhibits the capacity of the system for both insecure and secure operation modes. The capacity of the system is 3600 and 3150 passes per second in insecure and secure operation modes, respectively. In both cases the system becomes saturated at 50 potatoes, but capacity does not degrade as the number of potatoes increases. The relative difference in capacity is 12.5%, and is predominately affected by the CPU bounded task of message authentication.

5 Related Work

The challenge of securing peer-to-peer systems has been around since their advent. Sit and Morris [SM02] first identified a set of design principles for securing peer-to-peer systems and described a taxonomy of various attacks against them. This work was extended by Wallach [Wal02] who investigated the security aspects of systems such as CAN [RFH⁺01], Chord [SMK⁺01], Pastry [RD01], and Tapestry [ZKJ01], and discussed issues such as key assignment, routing, and excommunication of malicious peers.

Castro et al. [CDG⁺02] proposed several approaches to securing peer-to-peer overlays. They proposed to delegate assignment of keys to trusted certification authorities, that would ensure that the keys are chosen at random, and that each peer is bound to a unique key, with the peer’s IP embedded in the key. To securely route messages, they proposed to use constrained routing tables, which contain keys from specific locations in the overlay. In our case Chord already constrains a key’s location within the overlay, obviating the need for constrained routing tables. In fact, our self-policing and random routing mechanisms leverage this constraint.

Castro et al. [CDG⁺02] also proposed a routing failure test that tries to determine what nodes are malicious. Their approach also sends multiple copies of the message through diverse routes to ensure message delivery. Our approach is similar but less resource intensive. Our system uses the peer groups to detect faulty routing information, and to ensure that no peer is a choke-point between two other peers. Our system does not attempt to ensure the delivery of all messages, but instead attempts to ensure that some messages will be delivered.

Lastly, there are many ways to secure a peer-to-peer system, for example LOCKSS [MRR⁺03] uses majority voting replicas and computationally rate-limiting cryptographic puzzles [DN93]. Unfortunately, these approaches severely impact system performance and are not practical in the context where good performance is a necessity.

6 Conclusion and Future Work

We have designed and implemented a secure and efficient extension to the I3 [SAZ⁺04] implementation of the Chord structured overlay [SMK⁺01]. Our extension is aimed at closed overlays in which membership is tightly controlled. This context requires mechanisms for peer identification, authentication, and authorization, mechanisms for message authentication, and mechanisms to mitigate the behaviour of malicious peers in the overlay, which are unavoidable.

Our implementation uses a simple hashing scheme to generate keys that are linked to peer’s network address, and are uniformly distributed in the key space. The keys are embedded into messages, linking each message to its sender via an efficient two-part authentication mechanism, combining public key and HMAC message authentication. Secure routing is implemented via self-policing peer groups that force malicious peers to either behave properly or face detection. Lastly, these groups are leveraged for a simple random routing scheme that prevents choke-points within the overlay.

Our evaluation, which was performed on a local cluster, has demonstrated that our implementation’s overhead, of about 20%, is primarily due to CPU bounded operations. We believe that this effect will significantly decrease under normal conditions in the larger Internet context where latency will dominate, and where multiple peers are not running on the same host.

To validate this hypothesis, we intend to perform a more realistic evaluation using the Planet-Lab platform, which spans the world and will allow us to test much larger overlays. We are in the process of implementing the Trinity [BB07] e-mail classification system on top of our secure overlay. This will provide additional opportunities to identify and solve performance bottlenecks in our implementation.

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